

to your

Health!

"Promoting Good Health Through Information"

Veterans Affairs Palo Alto Health Care System • Patient Education Newsletter • Fall 2004

My HealthVet

My HealthVet is an internet-based program that helps veterans be more active partners in their health care. My HealthVet provides one central location for veterans and their families to get information about all veteran services.

Currently you can use My HealthVet to access the health library, learn about medical conditions, medications, health news and preventive health. Log on and try out the different health calculators or view the anatomy explorer. Your privacy is protected because all information you access is through your own secure password.

My HealthVet will be rolled out in phases. In the future, you will be able to use My HealthVet to request prescription refills online and view key parts of your medical record. You will also be able to use My HealthVet to record your home health measures such as blood pressure or glucose readings. With your consent, your VA provider will be able to view these.

Of course, participation is voluntary. Each veteran can choose his or her level of involvement in the My HealthVet program. Veterans can log on to www.myhealth.va.gov. Presently there are veterans enrolled in pilot programs at some VA medical centers. The pilot can be viewed at www.health-evet.va.gov. The username for the pilot is "demouserb", the password is "password_\$1". If you al-

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Recipe for Health

SCRUMPTIOUS MEAT LOAF

Use extra lean ground beef to lower the fat content in this meat loaf.

Ingredients:

1 lb ground beef, extra lean	1/2 tsp hot pepper, chopped
1/2 cup tomato paste (4 oz)	
1/4 cup onion, chopped	2 cloves garlic, chopped
1/4 cup green peppers	2 stalks scallion, chopped
1/4 cup red peppers	1/2 tsp ginger, ground
1 cup tomatoes, fresh, blanched, chopped	1/8 tsp nutmeg, ground
1/2 tsp mustard, low sodium	1 tsp orange rind, grated
1/4 tsp ground black pepper	1/2 tsp thyme, crushed
	1/4 cup bread crumbs, finely grated

1. Mix all ingredients together.
2. Place in 1-pound loaf pan (preferably a pan with a drip rack) and bake covered at 350°F for 50 minutes.
3. Uncover pan and continue baking for 12 minutes.

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Visit our new patient education website at
<http://www.palo-alto.med.va.gov/patienteducation/patienteducation.htm>

Makes 6 servings

Serving size: 1 (1-1/4-inch thick) slice

Calories	193
Fat	9 g
Saturated fat	3 g
Cholesterol	45 mg
Sodium	91 mg

<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov>

Preventing Falls and Fractures

A simple fall can change your life. Just ask any of the thousands of older men and women who fall each year and break (sometimes called fracture) a bone.

Getting older can bring lots of changes. Sight, hearing, muscle strength, coordination and reflexes aren't what they once were. Balance can be affected by diabetes and heart disease, or by problems with your circulation, thyroid or nervous system. Some medicines can cause dizziness. Any of these things can make a fall more likely.

Then there's osteoporosis – a disease that makes bones thin and likely to break easily. Osteoporosis is a major reason for broken bones in women past menopause. It also affects older men. When your bones are fragile even a minor fall can cause one or more bones to break. Although people with osteoporosis must be very careful to avoid falls, all of us need to take extra care as we get older.

A broken bone may not sound so terrible. After all, it will heal, right? But as we get older a break can be the start of more serious problems. The good news is that there are simple things you can do to help prevent most falls.

Take the Right Steps

Falls and accidents seldom “just happen.” The more you

take care of your overall health and well-being, the more likely you'll be to lower your chances of falling.

Make Your Home Safe

You can help prevent falls by making changes to unsafe areas in your home.

In stairways, hallways, and pathways:

- Make sure there is good lighting with light switches at the top and bottom of the stairs.
- Keep areas where you walk tidy.
- Check that all carpets are fixed firmly to the floor so they won't slip. Put no-slip strips on tile and wooden floors. You can buy these strips at the hardware store.
- Have handrails on both sides of all stairs – from top to bottom – and be sure they're tightly fastened.

In bathrooms and powder rooms:

- Mount grab bars near toilets and on both the inside and outside of your tub and shower.
- Place non-skid mats, strips, or carpet on all surfaces that may get wet.
- Keep night lights on.

In your bedroom:

- Put night lights and light switches close to your bed.

(Continued on back page.)

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My HealtheVet



ready know how to use a computer and the internet, log on from home, your local library or from one of the VAPAHCS kiosks or My HealtheVet terminals. If you are having trouble accessing My HealtheVet, you can stop by the Palo Alto library for assistance. ■

Healthy Aging Lecture Series

We are pleased to announce another year of our monthly “Healthy Aging Lecture Series,” held September through June. These lectures are sponsored by the Geriatric Research, Education and Clinical Center (GRECC) and the Women's Health Program. This series is open to everyone, including patients and their family members, staff and volunteers! Please feel welcome to attend, and bring a “brown bag” lunch. All sessions are held on Wednesdays from 12:00 noon to 1:00 p.m. at VAPAHCS Palo Alto Division, 3801 Miranda Avenue, Library Conference Room, Bldg. 101, 2nd Floor, A2-120. These lectures are also video-conferenced to all VAPAHCS Divisions.

For further information on v-tel locations, the video archive, other upcoming GRECC lectures, or for a map with directions, please visit our GRECC Website at <http://www.palo-alto.med.va.gov/show.asp?durki=851>. For further information on this lecture series, please call (650) 493-5000, Betty Wexler, RN, MS, CNS (x64143), Susan Bass, MSW (x65246), or Ann Thrailkill, RNP, MSN, CS (ext. 64253). ■

Upcoming Lectures

October 13, 2004
The Common Cold and
Flu Virus

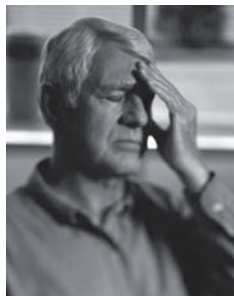
November 17, 2004
Stress Management
for the Holidays

January 19, 2005
Recreation Activities for
Patients with Dementia

February 16, 2005
Memory Problems:
When to Worry

Stroke Prevention

by Barbara Elspas, MPH



In the US, stroke is the 3rd most common cause of death after heart disease and cancer. It is the number one cause of disability, affecting 750,000 people in the US every year. Stroke occurs when an area of the brain is starved of oxygen and other nutrients due to a blocked or burst blood vessel. There are two main types of stroke: ischemic and

hemorrhagic. Ischemic strokes are more common than hemorrhagic strokes. Ischemic strokes occur when a blood clot blocks an artery. The hemorrhagic type occurs when blood spills into the brain tissue or into the space between the brain and skull bone.

Symptoms of Stroke:

You should be aware of the following stroke symptoms and seek medical help immediately if you or a loved one ever experience any of these symptoms. You should know the symptoms of stroke because stroke patients may not be able to communicate their symptoms adequately. You may need to communicate their symptoms to emergency medical staff for them.

Stroke symptoms include SUDDEN onset of:

- Heaviness, weakness or numbness of one side of the body (including face, arm and/or leg)
- Severe headache (the worst headache of your life)
- Dizziness or loss of balance
- Difficulty speaking or understanding speech
- Vision problems such as dimness, double vision, blurry vision, or loss of vision

Stroke is a medical emergency. You must call 911 immediately if you or someone you know experiences any of the stroke symptoms described above. Even if symptoms resolve within a few minutes, they may return and therefore, patients still need to go to the hospital as soon as possible. Every minute counts because early medical treatment may help to decrease the amount of permanent brain damage and disability that a stroke patient suffers.

Transient Ischemic Attack (TIA) is a major risk factor and a warning sign of stroke. One-third of people who have a TIA will have a stroke in the future. TIA happens when a clot temporarily blocks blood flow to an area of the brain. The symptoms of TIA are similar to stroke symptoms, except they usually go away with time (usually after 10-20 minutes). However, since there is no way to tell whether symptoms are caused by stroke or TIA, patients who experience

any stroke symptoms must seek medical attention immediately. Do NOT wait for stroke symptoms to go away, and do not think you are safe if the stroke symptoms pass.

To reduce your risk of stroke:

1. Treat high blood pressure
2. Stop smoking
3. Treat high cholesterol
4. Achieve proper body weight
5. Treat any abnormal heart rhythm
6. Do not abuse drugs or alcohol
7. Keep blood sugar under control if you have diabetes
8. Improve your diet: decrease fat, increase fiber (5 fruits or vegetables per day)
9. Do not strain to move your bowels
10. Ask your provider if you should take an aspirin or any other medications to decrease your risk of stroke
11. Make time for stress management activities (take a break, go for a walk, and do deep breathing exercises)
12. Exercise regularly

Living Well after Stroke

After a stroke, people may have paralysis on one side of the body, trouble speaking or understanding speech, vision loss, learning difficulties, or emotional changes. The good news is that we now know healing and skills improvement can continue well after the stroke. Patients may need therapy to help regain daily functions, such as walking, dressing, and speaking. Specialists in physical, occupational, and speech therapy can help stroke survivors improve their strength, movement, and speech, as well as teach them coping skills and adaptations for living with the effects of stroke.

STROKE QUIZ (True or False):

- T F** 1. If you see someone with signs of stroke, send them to bed.
- T F** 2. There are no good means to help prevent stroke.
- T F** 3. Stroke affects more people than lung cancer every year.
- T F** 4. If someone has one stroke they will not have another.
- T F** 5. Family history plays no part in likelihood of having a stroke.
- T F** 6. Statin drugs have been shown to increase the likelihood of stroke.

Answers: All false.

VA Palo Alto Health Care System Facilities

VA PALO ALTO DIVISION

3801 Miranda Avenue
Palo Alto, CA 94304
(650) 493-5000

VA LIVERMORE DIVISION

4951 Arroyo Road
Livermore, CA 94550
(925) 477-2560

VA MENLO PARK DIVISION

795 Willow Road
Menlo Park, CA 94025
(650) 493-5000

VA CAPITOLA OPC

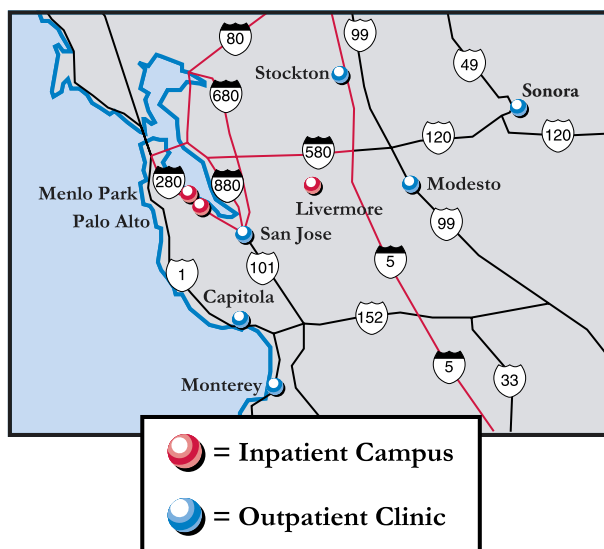
1350 N. 41st Street,
Suite 102
Capitola, CA 95010
(831) 464-5519

VA MODESTO OPC

1524 McHenry Avenue,
Suite 315
Modesto, CA 95350
(209) 557-6200

VA MONTEREY OPC

3401 Engineer Lane
Seaside, CA 93955
(831) 883-3800



VA SAN JOSE OPC

80 Great Oaks Boulevard
San Jose, CA 95119
(408) 363-3011

VA SONORA OPC

19747 Greenley Road
Sonoma, CA 95370
(209) 588-2600

VA STOCKTON OPC

500 W. Hospital Road
Stockton, CA 95231
(209) 946-3400

World Wide Web Address:
www.palo-alto.med.va.gov



Preventing Falls and Fractures *(cont'd from page 2)*

- Keep your telephone near your bed.

In other living areas:

- Keep electric cords and telephone wires near walls and away from walking paths.
- Tack down all carpets and area rugs firmly to the floor.

- Arrange your furniture (especially low coffee tables) and other objects so they are not in your way when you walk.
- Make sure your sofas and chairs are a good height for you, so that you can get into and out of them easily.

For More Information

Many States and local areas have education and/or home modification programs to help older people prevent falls. Check with your local government's health department or division of elder affairs to see if there is a program in your area.

Questions or Comments?

If you have any questions or topics you would like addressed in *To Your Health* feel free to contact:

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To Your Health is published quarterly for VAPAHCS veterans and their families.

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Tips for Healthy Living

- Try a new fruit or vegetable (ever had jicama, plantain, bok choy, starfruit or papaya?).
- Go for a walk with your family or friends after dinner.